

Who can tow your car or truck?

DC government officials can order **public tows**, in emergencies -- and when vehicles:

- Are booted for unpaid parking tickets – still not paid.
- Don't show licenses, registrations, or inspection stickers.
- Are disabled (broken down).
- Are parked in tow-away or other no-parking zones.
- Block private driveways.
- Are abandoned or threaten public health or safety.

A private property owner can order a **public tow** if a vehicle is illegally parked on private property and has been ticketed.

Private tows can be requested by:

- You or someone you authorize, by written agreement with the tow company
- Your lender (the company that financed your car)
- The vehicle's driver

What can you expect from the towing company?

The towing business must:

- Be licensed by DCRA -- after DCRA investigates it, its driving and criminal records, insurance, and surety bond.
- Follow all towing service license regulations.
- Have a separate license to operate a towing storage lot.
- Give courteous and respectful service, no matter what your car's condition; or your race, color, religion, sex, national origin, marital status, personal appearance, familial status, matriculation, sexual orientation, disability, source of income, family responsibilities, political affiliation, age, or place of residence or business.
- Post its rate list at its storage facility.

Your rights if your vehicle is towed

Before the tow, the company must give you or the driver:

- A towing rate list.
- The **Owner's Bill of Rights for Towed Vehicles**.
- A signed, itemized estimate of services the company will provide; their costs; the location from which the car will be towed; and operator's name, address, and vehicle owner.

If you see your vehicle being towed, you can:

- Ask to stop the tow. (If the official who ordered the tow agrees, you must pay the operator a \$50 drop fee.)
- Say where you want your vehicle towed – in or out of DC.

If the operator is towing the car out of the District, he/she must tell you the tow rate. (If you refuse to pay that rate, the operator may tow your car to his/her lot or a DC location you choose.)

Owner's Bill of Rights for Towed Vehicles

After the tow, you have the right to:

- Get an itemized statement of actual charges.
- Get the name and account number of the towing company's insurance carrier. (*The towing company is responsible for any damage from a public tow.*)
- Get a receipt, copy of the ticket or legal authority to tow the car, DPW towing control number, and the **Owner's Bill of Rights**.
- Pay by cash; insurance draft; money order; bank or certified check; or credit card (at least 2 nationally-known).
- Inspect your vehicle at the storage facility.
- Have no repairs made to your vehicle unless you authorize them in writing.
- Have the vehicle released to you, when you prove your identity and ownership and pay all charges.

How much can a towing company charge for a public tow?***

Standard: vehicles under 8,000 lbs	No more than..
Preparation, hoist, tow to a place in DC	\$100 per tow
Towing outside the District	\$3 per mile
Heavy-duty: vehicles over 8,000 lbs	No more than..
Preparation, hoist, tow to a place in DC	\$275 per tow
Towing outside the District	\$6 per mile
Services	No more than..
Road service	\$50 per visit
Disconnect (drop) fee	\$50
Storage fee*	\$20 per 24 hours**
Extra Charges (for accident sites or other special situations)	Operator may collect -- but get DCRA approval within 72 hours
* Daily storage fees start when the vehicle gets to the storage lot.	
** Or less, if the vehicle is stored less than 24 hours.	
***Private tow rates are listed in the company's Business License.	

What if you're towed for not paying tickets?

Pay online at dmv.dc.gov; by mail, to the address on the ticket; or at DMV Adjudication Services, 95 M St SW. Take proof of payment to the tow lot to claim your car. You may also have to pay towing and storage fees.

If an agency ordered a public tow of your car, how can you find it?

Call DC's Towing Control Dispatcher: (202) 541-6078.

Where can you complain about a towing company?

Call DCRA's Business Complaint line: (202) 442-8676.



Adrian M. Fenty
Mayor, Government of the District of Columbia
Linda K. Argo
Director, Department of Consumer and
Regulatory Affairs